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SUBJECT: FRAUDULENT "BAHAMAS" RECRUITER CONS MALAGASY

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: A scam promising jobs in the Bahamas took in reportedly thousands of Malagasy job seekers before the Government of Madagascar (GOM) exposed the fraud. Gateway Global Consultants, posing as recruiters for West Palm Textiles and Apparel, took USD 50 fees for a promise of possible employment in the Bahamas. After first ignoring the problem, the GOM confirmed via its Washington Embassy that no such company was registered in the Bahamas - too late for many would-be Malagasy emigrants. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) For several weeks a recruiting agency called Gateway Global Consultants has accepted USD 50 from thousands of Malagasy applicants to purportedly work in the Bahamas for West Palm Textiles and Garments. Given limited economic opportunity in Madagascar and the lack of sophistication of many Malagasy workers, this seemingly "too good to be true" offer of employment drew long lines of job seekers. When widespread response to this questionable offer became front-page news, Minister of Labor Tsiandopy's initial response was to call the recruitment a "private initiative" and deny any responsibility.

¶3. (U) Only after many applicants applied, but none were accepted or invited to travel to the Bahamas, did Minister Tsiandopy belatedly react with an investigation. Ministry requests for information from West Palm were reportedly ignored. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement indicating the Malagasy Embassy in Washington had conducted due diligence with the Embassy of the Bahamas, learning from their counterparts that no such company as "West Palm Textiles and Garments" was registered in the Bahamas. Secretary of State for Public Security Rasolofomanana announced September 4 that six suspects are prevented from leaving Madagascar pending investigation; one of the names, Steve Turmel, was released. The GOM has also frozen all bank accounts associated with West Palm.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The now-infamous "Bahamas recruiting scam" shows that despite modest economic growth and President Ravalomanana's aspirations for rapid development, there are many Malagasy who would pay a months' salary for just a chance to emigrate to an unknown country for an uncertain job. Minister Tsiandopy's paralysis while Malagasy people were bilked is disappointing but, unfortunately, not surprising. END COMMENT.

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